[133] dividing line of waters which separates the basin of the Paraguay, a tributary of the La Plata River, and the sources of the Ariños River, itself a tributary of the Amazon.

In its general aspect, the region is a sort of vast undulating plateau, falling slowly in the direction of the basin of the Amazon, with the highest points in the center and in the south (about 800 meters) and the lowest (about 350 meters) toward the north and west. Nevertheless, the traveler leaving from the south is greeted by an impressive spectacle when, after having traveled through 1,200 kilometers of high desolate land, he reaches the northwest border of the plateau, compared to the lowlands the difference in altitude is small, 100 meters at the most, but the rise is abrupt. Behind him, he leaves an interminable and sterile brush, while immediately at his feet begins, with the valley of the Gi-Parana, the no less interminable Amazon forest. This remarkable geographic frontier is also the western limit of Nambikwara territories.

Farther to the center and to the north, the aspect is different; running waters have worn ditches across the plateau which become larger in the direction of the Amazon basin. These depressions bring about differences in altitude up to 150 meters. One notices them especially in the region which extends from the Roosevelt River to the Doze de Otubro River, and they give this region a falsely mountainous aspect from which the fallacious expression "Serra do Norte" probably originates.

[134] [132] Geological constitution conspires with climatic conditions to [5] give the plateau its desolate physiognomy. The sand, product of the decomposition of the sandstone, provides a sterile soil, and the irregular distribution of rain explains the prairie-like aspect, so characteristic of the whole region. Except for a little rain—very rare—which falls sometimes in July or August, the "chuvas de caju," one might say that the period from April to September is completely arid. On the contrary, precipitation is violent and almost daily from October to March. There are storms when the rain lasts sometimes one, two or even three consecutive days. During the rainy season the temperature rises; 42 to 44 degrees[1] during the day, cooler at night, with a sudden and brief shower at dawn. But abrupt variations of temperature rather characterize the dry season, probably because of intense nocturnal radiation. It is not rare, at this season, to go from a daytime maximum of 40 degrees to a nocturnal minimum of 8 or 10 degrees. The Indians, who live completely nude, sleep on the ground, and know nothing of the use of coverings either of cloth or fur, suffer cruelly from this circumstance.

[291] [313]

[1] [i.e. degrees Centigrade.— Analyst]

2: Lévi-Strauss E-5 (1938-1939)1948
SP17 Nambicuara SP17

Nambicuara (Roquette-Pinto's *Uaintaçu*, which includes his *Kabishi*, *Tagnani*, *Tauitê*, *Tarutê*, and *Tashuitê*) between the Guaporé River Basin in the south and the Tenente Marqués, Iké and Roosevelt Rivers in the north and northwest; *Western Nambicuara* (new), closely related to the central and southern groups and living on the headwaters and in the upper basin of the Roosevelt River; and *Northern Nambicuara* (new), speaking its own language and living north of the central group.

The Indians mention other tribes north of the *Nambicuara;* one called *Saluma, Saruma,* or *Solondé* is almost certainly the *Mundurucú;* another may be the *Tapanyuma.*

In 1907, Rondón estimated the total *Nambicuara* population to be 20,000. In 1912 Roquette-Pinto met 1,000 to 1,500. It is doubtful whether the total population, which has been decimated by several recent epidemics, now greatly exceeds 1,500.

The *Nambicuara* language was previously thought to be isolated, but its distinctive trait—the use of classificatory suffixes dividing the universe into about ten categories—is strongly reminiscent of *Chibcha.*

Nambicuara culture, although less primitive than that of the *Sirionó* to the southwest, is strikingly simple in comparison with that of the neighboring *Paressí* to the southeast and of the *Tupí-Cawahib* to the northwest. Their lack of the hammock, their custom of sleeping on the ground, their crude ceramics (the *Eastern Nambicuara* entirely lack pottery), the nakedness of both sexes, their nomadism, their use of temporary shelters during most of the year, the general poverty of their material culture, and the simplicity of their social organization distinguish them from the higher cultures of the Guaporé River area, to which they nevertheless probably belong.

CULTURE

SUBSISTENCE

The *Nambicuara* habitat is a savannalike plateau about 500 to 1,500 feet (150 to 500 m.) above sea level with an arenaceous soil which comes from disintegrated sandstone bedrock. Except for narrow gallery forests along river banks, the region is infertile, having only shrubs and small trees with thorns or thick bark.

In this unproductive environment the *Nambicuara* have a dual subsistence pattern. They are both seminomadic bush dwellers and incipient farmers. During the dry season, women, accompanied by their children, forage with digging sticks for wild fruits, seeds, and roots, and catch grubs, rats, bats, spiders, snakes, lizards, and other small creatures, while men hunt what large game they can find with bows and arrows and collect wild honey.

132
134 The soil here is sandy and the rainfall insufficient to support a forest. The vegetation consisted of
136 stunted piqui, mangabeira, fruta de lobo, lixeiro,
137 and other gnarled cerrado trees with the surface sparcely covered with bunches of wiry grass and other drought-resistant plants. During the whole day we saw only four deer and two rheas, which gives some idea of the poverty of the area. This
000 is public domain and apparently unwanted by stockmen owing to its poor soil and lack of water. By now we had left the telegraph line, which crosses unbridged rivers, and were winding around the headwaters of the streams. That night we camped at Sucuruina where two palm-leaf-covered sheds, left by "tropeiros," provided some shelter from the drizzling rain.

133 The following day the skies cleared and from the
137 tops of the folds in the plateau we obtained magnificient views of the great plain. What few
312 trees could be seen were no more than 5 or 6 feet high. A curious phenomena seen along the plateau are the patches of forest of 5 to 10 acres in extent which appear to grow straight out of the semi-desert. Evidently ground water comes near the surface in these spots, permitting the growth of a genuine forest. Another interesting sight was the birth of rivers. In the shallow valleys formed by the folds, one could first see swampy ground, then tall grass, then bushes, then short trees, and finally the tall trees forming a "galeria" forest which bordered a river winding its way northward to form one of the headwaters of the Amazon system.

At 4 o'clock we arrived at the Sacre River where the trucks had to be ferried across on a raft. As this operation took until dark we camped for the night in some vacant buildings left by rubber workers. Before leaving next morning we visited the waterfall (Salto Bello) about 200 yards below the ferry where the Sacre River tumbles over a sheer drop of about 180 feet. Early in the afternoon we reached the Papagaio River and after ferrying the trucks across we were in Utiarity. Both the Sacre and the Papagaio are deep clear streams about 100 yards in width at the ferry crossings. These headwater streams are evidently fed by underground water, for their level does not vary appreciably during the year.

000 Utiarity, which was to be our base camp for the remainder of June and for July, is built on an

2[on the Serra
1[das Parecis.
- Analyst] [p. 83(B)]